

The Christian Community  
*Perspectives*  
March — May 2009

*Living with Integrity*

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# Perspectives

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How can we help in the growth of our movement—that was the question that came up at a recent conversation between members of the Stourbridge community and the British/Irish priests' synod. There is a certain temptation to indulge in dreams of evangelizing the great cities of our country—a temptation because it distracts us from the tasks in front of us. We recognised that what makes people want to join a religious movement is not something abstract, but human connections with people who are involved, and in whom they see its benefits. This means that it is in our hands to help in the growth of our movement. How we live with integrity, how we pray, and with what interest we turn to the world—this is our 'missionary work', far more effective perhaps than knocking on doors and answering questions that haven't been asked.

TOM RAVETZ

# Nursery Christ

Iain Cranford Hunter

*The cold cross, as it stands there, bare of His body, is a symbol of the future. The wind around it and the dark sky behind it are the future. A chaotic calendar is coming; a chopped up and messily re-assembled sun and moon. In the minds of us.*

*Confusion will settle in. Is. We are easily fooled and unsettled by evil settling in.*

*The centre is the Sun. You will find yourself there within it if you pay attention.*

*You will find yourself to be something like a diamond: indestructible, untroubled by the Great Fire of Love, only letting it shine through you, sparkling upon you and yours, moving upon and within you, warming you through and through. Your carbon heart, multi-faceted, colour-throwing, is centre and circumference. It looks out from within and within from without, shining lamp-like everywhere, bringing certainty.*

*The Sun-heart, which thinks.*

*Where? Upon a cross. Up from a grave. Going about everywhere.*

*Sunrise. When the Light comes wandering. It sees you, you see it: how much simpler could it be? The Light is singing upon and from our foreheads: listen. Christ is our brother and sister, our twin. He adores you and dotes on you like a good child, bringing you open-eyed daises from the garden in the morning. He kisses your cheek.*

*He loves you simply, wholly.*

∞

*Petals can shine like candle-flames, and wheel. You have them.*

*As gifts from Him, given faithfully. Use them. You would not use your hands to dig a grave if someone gave you a spade. You cannot do everything by yourself. And nothing you do is for anyone but others. By that you give yourself life; you choose.*

∞

*Where is the tomb now? Does it even exist? Is it not a shadowy deception? Confusion will settle in. Is. Too many words, well-meant; so many empty forms, well-meant. Tired of descriptions and explanations, of clever thoughts going in circles in the smooth concrete chambers of skulls; starved of manifestations, embodiments. Where is the Life?*

*A nursery rhyme:*

*Here am I — little jumping Joan — when nobody's with me — I'm all alone.*

*The Phantom leaps and dances, waiting for playmates and partners. It is twilight.*

*We people do lots of things, meanwhile. This and that other thing to attend to, well-meant. The past; the already-done, essentially. And illusions of the future.*

*We've yet to grasp the present; to perceive Life more than Death. Though Death is sometimes dressed-up nice, we admit. The Life lifts from Death. The Path does.*

*Clear, conscious daydreams pierce the semblances. The Real is finally seen again, after lifetimes gone by where wakefulness was won. The Truth again. Lies gone. Good known.*

*Then the top beam of the cross is gone, and dawn breaks over the cross-bough.*

*We awake more, annul the second death or prevent it, become new Adams.*

*Alive always.*

T

# The 'Sting of Evil' in Relationships and Marriage

Eva Knausenberger

*...and they brought a woman to him, who had been caught in adultery...*  
And what were the men caught in? What are we 'caught in' when we read these words of the Gospel?

Evangelium—the Gospel—means: the words of the angels. In order to have access to their words, we must allow the picture to come to life within us.

If we find the scene in the temple is within us, we can take a closer look and see what the angels see and want to share with us in this Gospel story.

The quality of the angels' seeing is a comprehensive, inclusive scope of vision. Angels see everything at once, they have the complete overview. And they have no opinion and no judgment about the content of their seeing.

We see immediately what the angels also see, namely what it is we are 'caught in': our habitual opinions and judgments, preconceived notions, conclusions, conjectures and perhaps a certain curiosity as to the outcome. In short: we see what in fact brought the Scribes and Pharisees into the Temple. While the woman has no choice but to accept her fate: 'the Law of Moses says: stone her to death', Christ writes a new law of choices into the earth.

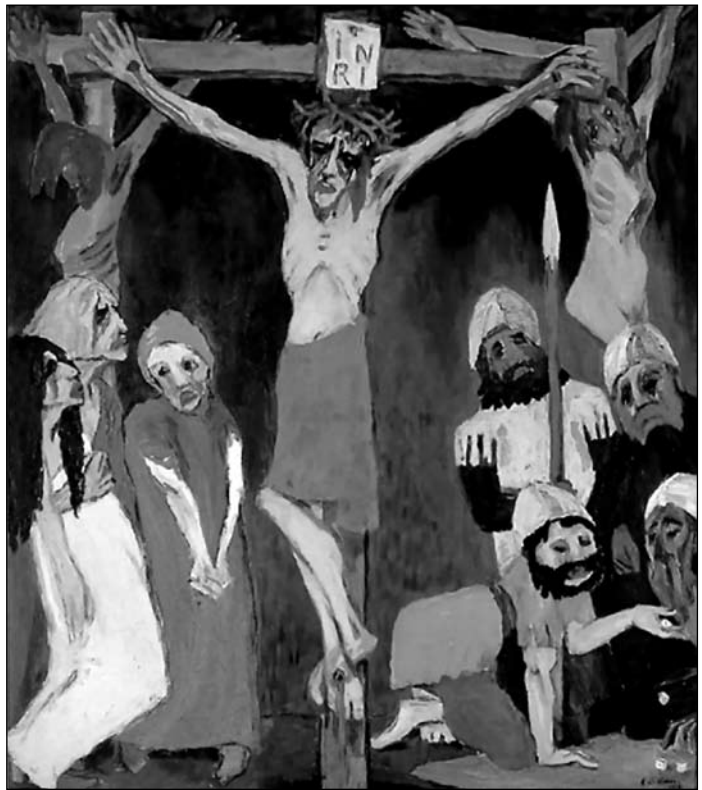
John 8:1–12 shows us a picture which is both dynamically real as well as archetypal reality of threatened relationships. It can be disturbing to realize that little has changed since: the immediate fall into judgment about those present, the ready opinions and personal, short-sighted solutions; all are present witnesses and perpetrators of misery and death of/in relationships.

Yet relationships are the most intimate, most decisive and life-enhancing life supportive factors in our lives. We cannot be out of relationship: we are always in relationship with the earth, with other people, whether they are present or not, with our own self, with what we ingest and exhale, with whatever we think and perceive. We are also always in relationship with the spiritual worlds.

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where she works as a  
psychotherapist.*

The woman is standing ‘in the middle’, with Christ Himself; she is an image of ‘the grave of hope’. He does not defend or accuse, he listens and asks questions. Amid the clamour for revenge, retribution and justice, in the silence of Himself He speaks a new law into existence and then writes it into the earth for all to read. With a few gestures and words He points out both the problem and the solution: ‘Those of you without sin may cast the first stone’. Everyone in His presence now stands accused, not only the woman. The Christ—in us—calls then and now for active self-observation in the light of the truth. He calls for the engagement of human conscience in the consciousness of our innermost heart. And we read that following His words silence fell and one by one the accusers left. When the accusers within us leave, they make space for love, for healing relationships, for healing insights into ourselves and others.

What did Christ imprint into the earth? We can know that there are words that heal relationships, healing the realm of intimacy and closeness. He inscribed such words into the temple, the inner sanctum of each one of us; it is there that we can read His words of love.



*Crucifixion*, Emil Nolde

# The Sin of Pride and the Sin of Self Hatred

The need to become bilingual in love and power

Deborah Ravetz

No matter who we are or where we live and work, we are faced with the question of our responsibility to ourselves and to others. This could be called the question of the individual and the community. This question led me to read *Faith Seeking Understanding* by Daniel Migliore, which describes two kinds of sin. The first is the sin of pride which refuses to limit the self and therefore allows no space for others. This kind of self centeredness is something most people can recognize and see as a problem. The second kind of sin is less discussed and often not tackled. This is described as the sin of self hatred where in negating ourselves we become passive and obsequious, making something or someone else responsible where we would have needed to respond with our own mature self, either with our question or our own point of view. Examples of these two kinds of sin are then described directly from the Christian story. Judas, whose act of betrayal was an act of aggression, is described as embodying the sin of pride. The other disciples on the other hand commit the sin of self negation or passivity because fear and cowardice cause them to be silent or absent when they would have needed to be visible and to speak.

Adam Kahane further elucidated this issue of the two kinds of sin in a lecture I recently attended. Adam works in some of the most challenging places in the world, facilitating dialogue and transformation. He found a tool with which to analyse the problems we face as human beings trying to live and work together in the work of Paul Tillich, who developed the idea of a polarity of love and power in human life. Tillich was the theologian who most directly inspired Martin Luther King. Put most simply, love is the need to harmonize and power is the need to realise the self in order to do one's work. No one can argue that these two forces are not essential. However each also has its shadow. Their counter image—that is, degenerate power and degenerate love—can be seen most simply in the conventional family setting. There a man goes out to work and devotes himself entirely

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to his own self realization, neglecting the relationship with his family and community, thereby making his self-realization hollow. On the other hand it is equally problematic when the wife gives herself entirely to nurturing, forgetting her own self-realization and being oblivious to the concerns of the wider world. Adam sees the source of degenerate power in the fear of being hurt. Degenerate love, on the other hand, is caused by the fear of hurting others.

Adam Kahane's words have some authority because of his work, in which he facilitates conversations between people who are totally at odds with each other in order to find creative solutions. He says that he has come to the conclusion that in order to solve tough problems and to come to any kind of community, we all need to become bilingual in generative power and generative love, the opposites of the sin of pride and the sin of self negation. He also says that to get to the bottom of any dysfunctional social group, small or large, one often needs to find the so-called 'peacemaker'. Such peacemakers persistently try to close down processes because they fear disruption and chaos. This is a problem because transformation always needs to meet chaos and bear it if it is to be fruitful. Adam's work has led him to the insight that what is needed to solve tough problems is the heart and the commitment to bear the chaos without running away and to learn deep listening so that what one senses is no less than the future coming towards us.<sup>2</sup>

These two issues bring to mind another polarity which seems relevant. Goethe said that in the full flow of life we develop our character and in silence and alone we develop our gifts. It would be equally strange to say: I want to develop my gifts and so I will give up developing my character, as it would be strange to say: I will neglect my gifts because I want to develop my character. The responsibility to build our character and not to neglect our gifts is surely the healthiest option. A balanced life means that one's work is sustainable because it is nourished from the wellspring which our gifts can be for us when we care about them. The musical person must have music, the lover of drama must have drama and the green-fingered person must have plants. Life is miserable without the element of play, whatever that may be for a particular person. Equally someone who earns their living by practising their gifts, whether this be music, art or any other gift, becomes very one-sided if they are not also connected in some way to the social life. I have a friend who is a very committed painter but who works with mountain rescue and in a community endeavour for disadvantaged people in order to give something back and to acknowledge his context



within the community. When I went to art school it was the fashion to say artists are so special they are allowed to behave badly. I have met this in many other settings where an individual was very good at something but absolutely antisocial. People would excuse a heartless disregard for others on the part of the gifted person by saying: 'Oh well, he is an artist, a genius, a special person.' I suspect that as the balance between our individual journeys and our place in community becomes ever more important, we will need to address destructive selfishness with more penetrating insight than this cliché.

What of those who do not earn their living by their gift but with some other kind of work? Often people in that situation neglect their gifts altogether. They may fear that they are only mediocre and shouldn't bother. They may then also believe that this rule applies to everyone who is not going to take their place in the great book of history. Another problem may be that stopping work means facing oneself. A friend of mine was a dedicated workaholic. At one point in his life he was involved in a process of group bullying in a community setting. Some years later I asked him why he had treated those people in such a harsh and vindictive way. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, 'They were just so happy!' The bullied group did a lot of practical work in the community, but they also did a lot for the cultural life. This meant coping with their own fear of performing or speaking in public. It also meant needing to make complicated arrangements to do justice to all their responsibilities. Workaholics, unwilling to take themselves in hand and create a more sustainable life, inevitably become tired and depressed. Looking at the group who had met that challenge, my friend felt resentment and a need to negate the very thing he needed himself. Ironically, the purely practical person can pull another weapon from their quiver and accuse the more balanced person of having privileges that they with their great burden must sacrifice. It is bitterly ironic that someone's inability to face their own fears and do the work of creating a balanced life can be elevated to a moral virtue to beat the rest who try not only to work and rest but also to play.

Ever and again in my life, I have been told things that I didn't find convincing. For instance at university, I was told that literature has no meaning because truth and morality were relative. I myself read great literature for one reason and one reason only: to find out how to be human. The point of view of my professors, which was backed by a powerful institution, left me feeling very vulnerable. I asked myself who I was to think differently from these great men and this old and powerful institution? Somewhere,

however, despite my vulnerability, I had some respect for my own soul. I neither agreed nor disagreed; all I could do was keep my question, and stay in a space where there was no solid ground, only movement. In doing this I found that I couldn't agree with my teachers and so I was seen as a bad student. I discovered then and in every other situation where I kept my question, that it was hard not to conform. One was expected to accept and be happy.

Recently I was part of a group making art in a community. One of the texts we worked on was Ibsen's play, *Peer Gynt*. Peer Gynt meets the Button Moulder, who comes to collect him to be melted down for buttons. Peer Gynt protests—surely he deserves more, either heaven or hell, but not mere oblivion. The Button Moulder tells him that as a person who has been nothing but neutral it wouldn't matter if he didn't exist. Peer then asks how he should have lived to avoid the Button Moulder. He is told he should have lived his life intensely. His avoiding the primary truth of life, that to find himself he must lose himself, has made him mediocre rather than a glinting button on the waistcoat of life. It is hard to encapsulate in a few words what it means to find oneself by losing oneself; to become through dying. I think it means that one needs to search not for security and a quiet life, but rather for the courage to live in process in a search for the truth in all its complexity. This means giving up beloved points of view when we see they no longer hold water; it means rebuilding oneself and one's relationship with reality over and over again as one's understanding deepens and matures.

Joseph Beuys famously said that everyone is an artist. I have recently discovered that he didn't mean the word 'artist' in the conventional sense. He meant that everyone had a unique spirit which needed to be realized so that they could be enabled to do their part in the great work of transforming the earth. This relationship with the deep self and the work of transforming the earth is what he calls Social Sculpture. For Beuys, self realization and the doing of one's life's work was a work of art. Making this work of art would mean taking oneself and one's responsibilities seriously, another thing that takes courage. Adam Kahane began his lecture with the following words.

*For the past fifteen years I have focused my attention on answering one question: how can we address our toughest social challenges? Our two most common ways of dealing with these challenges are the extreme ones, war and peace. Either we push through what we want regardless of what others want—but inevitably people push back. Or we try not*

*to push anything on anyone—but that just leaves the situation as it is. Neither of these things work, we need a better way: a way beyond war and peace.*

It is my experience that the times I have kept my questions and not just conformed have made my life very uncomfortable. However the times when I did not, instead doing or supporting things that I couldn't truly understand or stand for made me become institutionalized. I ceased to think and live in a clear and transparent way. Instead I lived by phrases rather than deeply held values. It is a continual struggle to stay awake and not to fall into the polarities of action or passivity but rather to remain uncomfortable with only an unanswered question. This is the place that Keats called 'negative capability'. It is so important because if we can stay there without fleeing or creating false answers, the diamond of our very self can be forged. Peer Gynt was a person who refused to do this work and was so unrealised that he was nothing. This kind of nothingness, this lost potential is what is exploited by the forces who want to hurt and control humanity whether politically on the world scale, or in a tiny social group like a community or a group of colleagues. This kind of nothingness can make one stand and do nothing in the face of wrong because one has no personhood to discriminate and be active for the good. It turns out that becoming a self is not just a personal matter.

Learning to live in process, learning to listen and also to speak, learning not only to overcome pride but also self negation; these seem to be some of the challenges facing us. Process means times of great insecurity. Bearing those times not once but over and over again in a single life demands courage and commitment. I mentioned earlier that Adam had discovered that at the root of every dysfunctional social situation small or large one can find the work of a so-called peacemaker. The peacemaker will always try to shut down processes out of their fear that the process will fail and end in chaos. This is the outcome of the sin of self negation, where the fear of process, with all its potential dangers, is called tolerance or love. In fact this so-called 'love' is often no more than a refusal to believe that we can find a common language which is neither cliché nor conformity, but a celebration of our differences, turned to common goals, however unlikely and dangerous this may at first seem.

There are two kinds of chaos. One is destructive and comes out of pride and the will to control. The other kind is the one I want to learn about and celebrate, to give its beauty and fruitfulness a space. This second kind of chaos is not destructive but creative. It is about development and

complexity. It demands a willingness to forgo one's own personal comfort for something more important: a continual search for deeper and more clearly-articulated truths that do not exclude but include without demanding conformity. It demands of us truthfulness and goodwill for each other as well as for the earth and all its creatures.

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*Stage scene, Emil Nolde*

# I Am Darkness but Lit Like a Sun

A poetic journey

Peter Howe

## My Brilliant Image

*One day the sun admitted,  
I am just a shadow.  
I wish I could show you  
The Infinite Incandescence  
That has cast my brilliant image!  
I wish I could show you,  
When you are lonely or in darkness,  
The Astonishing Light  
Of your own Being!*

Hafiz

Christ 'bears and orders' the 'life of the world,' the sphere of the earth's life forces, that mysterious, unquantifiable realm where life is born and maintained. In poetic imagery, it is the realm of 'the clouds,' where light, warmth, air, moisture and fine matter intermingle. We are immersed in this sphere as in an ocean and it permeates us, every cell of our being.

The natural world is a picture of spiritual realities. Plants and creatures, landscapes, the elements, the natural cycles and events of the earth are all images, cast in matter, of spiritual beings, processes and events. This includes our own body, which is a material picture of our soul and spiritual self. The writer Thomas Moore, using a phrase from the 'Jesus Sutras' describes the body as 'the physical life of the soul':

*The body is the soul presented in its richest and most expressive form.*

The same is true of the Earth: the feminine soul of the earth is the divine Sophia; its spiritual self is Christ.

In early times peoples considered the material world an illusion, the true reality being the spiritual one, our lives a dream dreamt by gods. Our scientific consciousness has the opposite experience: the only reality is material;

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soul and spiritual events are the illusion. We can also consider that spirit and matter are equally real.

So, even our sun is an image of an inconceivably powerful spiritual sun which permeates every part of the universe, spiritual and physical, including each one of us. All ancient civilisations perceived this Being and gave it different names.

*What brilliance there would have been if a thousand suns were to blaze forth all of a sudden in the sky—to that was comparable the splendour of that great Being.*

Baghavat Gita, Ch. 11

How alienated I am from the natural world. When I walk in nature I feel loneliness and distance from the creation. The more beautiful it is, the worse the experience of separation. Most of us feel this from an early age:

*I walked down to Houghton Mill  
When I was nine  
God looked at me across the stream  
From out of trees, the willows green  
The river deep it seemed to stand  
Reflecting sky  
While I  
So still, among the weeping willows knew  
I am here but You are there  
You are Nature green and fair,  
While I stand here and on my own.  
I am alone.  
When I was one and twenty, I  
Walked up the mountain, not a climb  
An easy stroll and all around  
The mountains rolled  
There were no trees, just sun and rock  
The blazing sky, the empty earth  
And then I saw that  
I am here and  
God is gone  
He is not found up in the air, or in the ground,  
Nor in my heart or in my head.  
God is dead.*

From Houghton Mill

Is it my own separation I feel, or the sorrow of Nature herself at being so assaulted and marginalized by our global civilisation? Equally, we can feel distanced from other people—we want to be interested, but how? And indeed, we can feel distanced from our own feelings and sense of purpose. The general tone of contemporary consciousness reflects our separation from the world of life forces, soul and spirit. It is rational, dry, cool, sceptical. In order to reconnect with the natural world, with our own feelings and also with our fellow human beings, we have to choose to make an effort.

For most of us, it is when we are broken that we can open ourselves. Illness, accident or the toll of life bring us to our knees and there is nowhere to go but finally to face ourselves and our nature honestly. We arrive at an uncomfortable place, a place of unresolved questions and searching, a place where we sit with our pain and try to hear its message. It is a threshold, a liminal space, neither here nor there. The writer Thomas Moore quotes Keats' famous letter:

*Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?... Call the world if you please, 'the vale of soul-making.'*

This is a difficult, edgy place, from which we would like to return to a world of security and certainties. But we might also feel, like Keats, that this is a healthy and creative state to be in, one which many artists and spiritual teachers have endured and lived out of.

I am in a place where I know: I can't do this alone, I need help; I can only pray.

I pray in the knowledge of my weakness, my loss of direction, my refusal to comprehend.

I long for wholeness, health and strength: not for my own pleasure but in order to do what I need to do – to conduct my life and do my work, to look after those who need me, and to do justice to my own abilities.

When I found myself there, I had never prayed to Christ for myself; I had prayed for others, but my own needs seemed unimportant. How could I ask for myself when there is so much hunger, so many wars and atrocities going on? I saw Christ as some kind of Superman who can only save one at a time. I began to know that when I can let this force stream through me, I am not making a demand but allowing it to fulfil its task.

I feel it within me: the sun, this source of healing, wholeness and strength; not for myself but to fulfil my life. I open myself to this and a weight falls from me.

It is not a once and for all event; I will need to do this every day.

## **The Night God Came**

*The night God came  
I woke in the dark  
Above me the stars of the universe  
Stream like milk  
Flow over my body  
Pour through my front  
My throat  
My breast  
My belly  
Like milk and honey  
Like bliss.  
For days I lay  
Nourished by love.  
The pain of remorse  
Lost love  
Had entered and entered  
And opened me completely.*

I recently saw the well-known painting ‘The Light of the World’ by Holman Hunt in Keble College, Oxford. What impressed me was that the text on which it is based is not ‘I am the Light of the World’ but the Revelation to St. John 3: 20:

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.*

Christ knocks at the door which, like the heart, can only be opened from within.

Many contemporary writers, psychologists and healers who are concerned with self-development refer to this source of infinite well-being, creativity and spiritual health which exists at our core. Rudolf Steiner describes the true self of the human being as, in evolutionary terms, the youngest element in our make-up. It is the child in us—innocent, playful and vulnerable. It is a flame in us, a small spiritual sun. All these writers stress its centrality to our development and health, of creativity. The way to draw out our true being, to find out who we are and what we want, is through creating. All these authors refer to the inner child, the inner artist, the artist child, this pure, anarchic, needy and brave being within us – our true self!



Creativity has two sides: on the one hand it is fun, and playful: we can do whatever we like; on the other hand it is absolutely serious—we have to do it, have to ‘turn up’, to use Julia Cameron’s phrase. Our excuses—time, children, money, energy—are those of the wedding guests in the parable, who have their farms and other commitments to go to but who, in so doing, miss the great chance of their life.

Globally mankind is attacking the earth and its life, in all kinds of ways. In our personal lives we do it too when we close ourselves off to ‘the light of the world’, when we stay within the safety of our known, habitual selves and avoid the discomfort of the liminal space, of inconvenient emotions and dangerous creative stirrings. The emergent sun is knocking at our heart, but we are too busy, preoccupied, sensible. The spiritual sun has entered the living sphere of the Earth, of which we are part. It is shining within but we shut him out again. This shutting out has been described as a second crucifixion.

We often say we are powerless in the face of climate change, social breakdown and global problems. Is it more likely that actually we are afraid of the power that resides within us, the responsibility that goes with it, and the path of humiliation and self-acknowledgement that unlocks it?



*The Light of the World,*  
Holman Hunt

### **The door**

*The path  
There is no path  
I make the path by walking  
I am nothing  
But receive endlessly  
I am empty  
But brim over with fulness  
I am darkness  
But lit like a sun  
I am astonished  
The world enters me  
And pours from me  
I am the light  
I am the door.*

Poems by Peter Howe,  
except ‘My Brilliant Image’  
from *I Heard God Laughing*,  
renderings of Hafiz  
by Daniel Ladinsky.  
Penguin Books 2006.

# Escape from the planet of the ear-worms

## Reconciling spiritual life with modern technology

John Addison

Mobile phones are one of the most useful of modern inventions. They improve personal safety and convenience immeasurably. However, they have their downside. We are all familiar with the misuse of the mobile phone, of how it adds a frenetic undertone to daily life. iPods are even more perplexing. There is some use in having a lightweight portable music system and it can be nice to listen to while jogging. However, it is remarkable that a sport that was once considered a little idiosyncratic has become turned into just another commodity, an accessory of modern life. Gone are the days when you could run through nature and let the events of the day or week settle in your soul under the gentle heart-and-lung rhythm of a long run. Today one ventures forth bristling with technology – digital stopwatches, pedometers and, of course, your iPod.

Mobile phones and iPods both concentrate on the ear. With mobile phones, the tendency is towards short, snappy phrases – long, involved or subtle discourse is not easily possible; we are in the culture of the sound bite – short, easily digestible—and disposable—thoughts. Despite the possibility of iPods and the internet to provide

a vast variety of music, most people tend to only listen to what's 'in', what has been marketed and presented in the form of sanitised pop music. What once was

a threat to the established order of things has been toned down and turned into a commodity. What makes a modern pop song is the 'hook' – a musical phrase or chorus that embeds itself in the listener's mind and repeats itself endlessly until it is replaced by a new 'hook'.

There is another term for the 'hook' – 'ear-worm', which Oliver Sacks goes into in detail in his recent book, 'Musicophilia: Music and the Brain'. The term 'ear-worm' ('ohrwurm') was first used in the 1980s in Germany. In the 1920s there were attempts to consciously create tunes that would hook into the mind. Sacks also notes that as early as 1876 Mark Twain wrote a story called 'A Literary Nightmare' involving people being at the mercy of 'jingles'.

Sacks goes on to describe his work with patients afflicted with post-encephalitic parkinsonian tendencies. They would often be confined in what he called a 'musical prison' in which they would endlessly repeat a few notes, like prisoners pacing around a prison yard. He also describes the extreme repetition of movements and sounds in conditions like Tourette's syndrome and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

The parallel between what people look like when they are in the grip of mobile phones and iPods is more than just an amusing coincidence.

With the insights of anthroposophy, it is not too far fetched to say that the 'ear-worms' may indeed be actual worm-like

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elemental beings that burrow into human souls. Also, TV is riddled with hooks and jingles. Even the body language of TV presenters shares these characteristics.

Becoming conscious of the techniques used to manipulate us is the first step to coming into a free relationship to electronic media.

A second step can be to go deeper into considering the effects of electronic media on the human soul. (Please note that the aim is not to find new justifications for the wholesale prohibition of such media, but to find a 'thought-space' in which people can find ways to relate to them in freedom.)

'Attention Restoration Theory' is a theory used widely in social and therapeutic horticultural work, based on the research of Kaplan and Kaplan.

In 1989, they suggested that both passive and active engagement with nature has restorative effects on emotions and mental processes. Basically, being in contact with nature is good for people. Whether it be working on the land, hiking, or even just looking out of your window at trees, the forms, colours and whole sensory experience of natural surroundings work therapeutically on the human soul and thought processes, balancing some of the tendencies of modern life.

In 1990, they described what they called the 'four components of the restorative experience':

- *Escape*
- *Fascination*
- *Extent*
- *Compatibility*

With *Escape*, we have something fairly clear to grasp – namely the desire to escape from ordinary life. We long to retreat

from the blather and bother of both work and home environments. The endless debates, intrigues and claims on our time, and the myriad bits of gossip and worry and unnecessary little jobs with which we fritter away our days – all these are what we long to escape when we head off into the woods or to the hills.

*Fascination* is the ability of something to hold your attention without your effort. This can be both a good and bad thing. TV, for instance, holds your attention without any effort on your part. Where it is health promoting is when a beautiful landscape or a beach so absorb you that you forget all the vexations that weigh your soul down.

*Extent* is described as the feeling of being in an ordered and meaningful 'other' world that is so extensive that it preoccupies you. An example of this is JRR Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings' – an epic tale that is saturated with resonant natural imagery. Part of the success of the work is that the imaginary world he creates is internally coherent and is so vast, yet detailed, that you can return to the book again and again, rather like travelling to another country.

Lastly, *compatibility* between the individual and the environment is also considered to be one of the key components of the restorative process. An obvious example of this would be that a working farm and a person in their twenties or thirties would be compatible, but a working farm and eighty or ninety year old people would not necessarily be compatible. (Of course, modifications and accommodations can be made to an environment to include more people; for instance, making a vegetable garden wheelchair accessible.)

For the purposes of this article, a component of the restorative process that would be fruitful to consider in more depth is *fascination*. Both Kaplan and Kaplan (in 1995) and Herzog (in 1997) describe how the possibility of an individual to find space for *reflection* is important to their personal, social and ecological health. They consider reflection to be the basis of the restorative process.

They then go on to describe two types of fascination and their relationship to reflection:

- *'Hard' fascination.*
- *'Soft' fascination.*

Hard fascination is typified by environments such as amusement parks and rock concerts. The sensory overload is so vast that the individual is fascinated, in the sense of being overwhelmed. As entertaining and fun as these activities are, they nonetheless leave one feeling subtly drained if they are indulged in too often.

Soft fascination is to be found in natural settings—a stroll in the park, pottering in the back garden, walking by a river. There is a feeling of deep peace resonating inside you after doing these activities, and one's sleep can be more rejuvenating as well.

With this set of concepts we can return to consider TV and other electronic media. Mobile phones, the internet, 'shuffling' through the playlists on one's iPod and playing computer games are intensely fascinating. They occupy you to the extent that time can fly by. Yet the feeling inside you have after an evening spent reading is very different from the feeling you have if you have spent the evening surfing the web.

All of this is not to suggest, however, that 'hard' fascination is completely

wrong and should be prohibited. It is debatable whether or not sealing yourself off from recorded music or movies necessarily makes you a more spiritual person.

To create spaces in our life for soft fascination, however, can be a prelude to practising an inner spiritual path. In fact, in Steiner's foundational work *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* his point of departure for leading the reader to formal spiritual training is to advise one to seek out for oneself regular islands of peace and quiet in the course of a normal, busy day.

In the twenty first century it could be argued that before this there could be another preliminary practice, namely creating islands of soft fascination in a technology saturated, noisy and increasingly fast and busy world.

With more relevance to the spiritual practice of The Christian Community is the book *Meditation: Guidance of the Inner Life* by Friedrich Rittelmeyer. Although written in 1929, it contains many statements and thoughts that are directly relevant to our contemporary theme. In the first chapter he speaks of the soulless, mechanical nature of the world of work and then goes on to consider what people do in the name of 'recreation':

'Besides sleep and quite stupid rest, sensation is the only recreation. Excitement is sought either in sport or in news of sport; men give themselves over to the nerve-stimulating sensations of the cinema, wireless or revue, or read detective novels, or begin to gamble. One often gets the impression that such men are merely corpses, animated by skilful arts into an appearance of life. The saying in the Act of Consecration of Man concerning the 'dying earth existence', expresses the

dreadful background of reality behind the superhuman strain of the present day.’

Rittelmeyer saw clearly where this situation was heading:

*And so let it be boldly said that behind all this one can often see spiritual sickness coming; not only the death of soul which Nietzsche describes in his Zarathustra as coming to the ‘last human being’, but ‘demonic madness.*

For many of us it proves very difficult to meditate to the extent and level necessary to provide an effective counterbalance to the electronic media environment that we live and work in. (This is also because we actually enjoy it as well!)

The sacraments of The Christian Community can be of great help here: the physically ordered and coherent space in which they are enacted and the feeling of ‘escape’ from the trying circumstances of one’s life; the sense of being on the threshold of a spiritual experience that is ‘extensive’ in a deeply meaningful, resonant and refreshing way. And then there is the understated imagery, ritual and language that creates a space for ‘soft fascination’ that goes beyond what the natural world can offer purely from out of itself.

The intention here is not to lay the foundation for a harsh and humourless onslaught against electronic media.

It is said by some that electronic media (along with alcohol and other aspects of modern life) cut people off from the spiritual world. This is true, as such. However, it is worth bearing in mind that there is a good deal of romanticising of spiritual experiences in anthroposophical circles. Spiritual experiences can be wonderful and fulfilling, but they can also be terrifying and overwhelming.

To protect ourselves from experiences that we might not be able to withstand, we use things like alcohol and electronic media as ‘filters’ to tone down spiritual impressions that we are not strong enough to live with. (In fact, if you think that everything exists for a purpose then this may very well be why such things exist.)

But how can we work on ourselves so that we can begin to remove the filters? Because the filters can easily become prison bars – just like the patients of Oliver Sacks, trapped in ‘musical prison yards’. We need them, but we also need to go beyond the point of needing them.

A common trap that we fall into is that ‘being an anthroposophist’ is often reduced to a list of prohibited activities. No TV. No alcohol. No junk food. You can’t eat this and you can’t eat that. You can’t do this and you can’t do that. And if you insist on doing any of them then you are not ‘one of us’.

This approach can involve a removing of the filters from the outside by a community or organisation before the individual is ready for this, often leaving people feeling tender and open, confused, even bitter.

The outer-inner approach of prohibiting activities seems to be declining. We are at a point where we need to find a new way to approach the problem of dealing with things like electronic media.

Through ideas such as ear-worms, Attention Restoration Theory, as well as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ fascination, we can begin to approach activities such as anthroposophical meditation or the Act of Consecration with renewed enthusiasm. Particularly through the Act of Consecration of Man, we can enter a space that

is truly restorative; a space that can lead to an experience of Christ.

With the 'spirit certainty' that comes with a meeting with Christ comes also the inward support that enables us to begin to remove the 'filters' with which we wall ourselves in against being overwhelmed by spiritual experiences.

To finish with an image: phenomena such as electronic media form a filter that can be seen imaginatively as being like a chrysalis. When the soul within the chrysalis is strong enough to live in the greater world, the chrysalis will fall away and the higher self will emerge like a butterfly.

## Pastoral Points: Burn Out

**Julian Sleigh**

The vital thing to say about Burn Out is: do all you can to avoid it happening to you! If you set yourself a programme that leaves you no time for rest and recreation, if you find yourself spending more and more time on your own, working till late at night, detached from colleagues and family, if you feel you have to prove something to yourself and to the world, and if your blinkers inhibit your vision of the bigger picture, the stress you are putting yourself under can lead to burning out. You may well deny that there is a problem; you might even feel passionate about your solitary mission. Then come the signs that tell you 'you are running on empty'.

Here are some of those signs:

*Energy for daily life goes down, possibly to zero, but you keep going.*

*Enjoyment of life and work dwindles, even though you doggedly pursue your self-imposed programme.*

*You begin to feel that in actual fact you are not coping so you try harder.*

*Joy gives way to worry, worry to anxiety: you become more and more sensitive and 'touchy'.*

*You feel trapped but cannot ask for help.*

Then you find it difficult to sleep. You let your appearance become dishevelled, the man does not bother to shave, the woman to care for her hair.

The next phase becomes dangerous: you have no appetite and neglect eating, you distance yourself from your spouse, you may start another relationship.

You become adamant and even angry that such an enormous programme and task has befallen you; and you begin to lash out at your surroundings and towards God. Such pent-up anger only adds to the existential isolation and the conviction that nobody understands you.

Being isolated and estranged from your usual support system, you become more convinced that your attitudes and actions are justified even if you have to go it alone.

A friend can draw near, but you have no wish to hear platitudes like 'You need to take a break', for this denies the validity of your urgent quest. You don't want to be asked 'What is wrong with you?'

So, what can be done to help people who are in the grip of burn out? Accompany them, and relate to their higher being. Again the formula applies: not to teach

nor preach but to reach. Try to come alongside and show them your positive regard. Develop understanding and interest for their quest, in no way knowing better. Communicate, so that they begin to communicate with you. Ideally go for a walk together and have some refreshment. Help them to feel at ease and to relax. And to laugh. Help them to 'come to themselves' and to experience the flow of feeling, to find and express their own truth, goodness and beauty. Do not,

however, outstay your welcome; don't try to heal them but rather let them find the healer in their own being.

More inwardly, call upon their Angel to take away the stress. Pray to Christ to guide your efforts to reach them, so that when you are together Christ can be with you.

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## The Sacraments of The Christian Community

Michael Debus

### The Concept of Evolution and the Sacraments—Seven in Number

The boldness of the scholastic theologians in applying the Aristotelian concepts of form and matter to the sacraments corresponds to the boldness with which Rudolf Steiner applies the concept of evolution to the sacraments. The concept of evolution is not of great antiquity; it was actually only developed gradually in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Among the first to use this concept in a form corresponding to our idea of it was Lessing (1729–1781). In 1780, shortly before his death, the pamphlet *The Education of the Human Race* was published. In it, the idea of evolution led Lessing to develop the concept of reincarnation. In two places, the term (evolution) already appears explicitly in its modern sense. Goethe (1749–1832) uses the word countless times, especially in his Wilhelm Meister and in his natural-scientific writings. And ultimately the concept invades the natural sciences and there—in com-

plete contrast to Goethe—it becomes the basis of the materialist concept of the world. After Darwin, and particularly Haeckel, the concept of evolution has irrevocably made the human being into a more highly developed mammal.

For Rudolf Steiner the concept of evolution was decisive for the modern consciousness and for spiritual research. But he also describes quite clearly 'what actually is amiss with the more recent doctrine of evolution.' For if one 'stays with general, trivial ideas of evolution,' the only result is that one comes to 'view Man as the most highly developed of the animals.' The reason is that the concept of evolution has been taken in a one-sided way, as an 'unfolding' of something already present, as it were. But this thought is quite contrary to a spiritual world-view. It needs supplementing, something for which Rudolf Steiner already strove in his youth—a 'correction to the concept of time.' The true nature of time is two-fold; it is not

only the stream flowing from the past towards the future; there is also a spiritual counter-stream that comes from the future and flows towards the past and that carries our will-impulses. In conversation with Edouard Schuré, Steiner called this 'the double-stream of time.' The complete evolution-concept, too, has a double aspect. Writing about his conversations with Rudolf Steiner on this subject, Schuré says: 'We are all conscious of the outer stream of evolution which sweeps everything in heaven and earth along with it—stars, plants, animals, human beings—and which makes them move ever onward into the infinite future; yet we are not aware of the original power which propels them and drives them on without pause. But within the universe there is also a reverse stream which moves in the opposite direction and which continually intervenes in the first stream. This is the stream of involution, through which the ideals, the forces, the beings and the souls who originate in the invisible world and the realm of eternity ceaselessly enter into visible reality. No evolution of matter would be comprehensible without this continuous involution of the spirit ... this is how the spirit that contains the germ of the future involves itself in matter; and matter which receives the spirit evolves towards the future.'

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The full concept of evolution, then, is two-fold: Evolution as well as Involution. It may seem surprising that this complete idea of evolution appeared on the spiritual

horizon of mankind as early as the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, long before the concept as such had arisen within culture in general. In his *Monadologie*, written in 1714, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) used the concepts evolution and involution in a germinal way. Rudolf Steiner sometimes also speaks of devolution instead of involution. Within every outer unfolding there also flows a counter-stream of withdrawal; as for example in the case of plants, where the process of forming seeds can be characterized as a counter-stream. Only when we take account of the involution stream is the working of the spirit comprehensible. As Rudolf Steiner states clearly in his *Philosophy of Freedom*, in reality our thinking works counter to our bodily organisation: 'The essence which is active in thinking has a two-fold function: first it restricts the human organisation in its own activity; next, it steps into the place of it.' The degree to which the spiritual activity of Man can manifest itself is dependent upon the extent to which the outer forces of (bodily) evolution can be 'repressed'—in other words the extent to which forces of involution become active. Spiritual activity is always gained at nature's expense. But what it takes from nature it can give back to her in spiritual form as 'meaning'. Only in culture—in the widest sense—does nature attain its meaning (and purpose). Nature is borne by the evolution-stream; one could also say: by the birth-stream. If we remain at that level, we only see the world materialistically. All spiritual activity arises from involution, the stream of time that comes from the future and which has death as its origin.



This gives an indication of the background to the new understanding of the sacraments inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner. The first time he spoke of this was on June 14, 1921 to the small group of eighteen participants of the first course which then led to the founding of The Christian Community fifteen months later. 'As you know, in our times the Catholic Church does not recognize pre-existence. All there is, is a thought in the mind of God, and this proceeding forth from the thought of God is conceived of as being in seven stages. But these seven stages must be matched by (corresponding) other forces. Birth is an evolution, adolescence is an evolution, every evolution-form is matched by an involution-form: birth by baptism, puberty by confirmation. Each sacrament is the inverse of a natural stage of evolution.' There are, then, seven stages of evolution, and over against them are placed 'seven stages of involution, and these are the seven sacraments of which four are 'earthly': Baptism, Confirmation, Altar-sacrament, Confession. These four are as generally human as are physical body, ether body, astral body and Ego. If we ascend further, we come to Spirit Self, Life Spirit and Spirit Man ... these, then, are the seven sacraments, the last of which are Last Anointing, Ordination of Priests and Marriage. They are simply the inverse events of the natural events which occur in the human being, and the corresponding ritual acts are also arranged on that basis.'

Here Rudolf Steiner takes it completely for granted that there are seven sacraments. The fact that only two are accepted in Protestantism is, according to

him, because already at the time of the Reformation there was no longer 'any sense for the inner number-constitution of the world.' The Mediaeval Church took until the 12<sup>th</sup> Century to arrive at the seven-fold nature of the sacraments. Thomas Aquinas was then the first who, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, also gave reasons for this seven-fold structure by attempting 'to see them in the light of their anthropological function,' i.e. as a logical concomitant of human biography. The particular sequence of the sacraments was justified similarly: Baptism—Confirmation—Altar-sacrament—Confession—Last Anointing—Consecration of Priests—Marriage. This attempt still appears very rudimentary. In Thomas's time it evidently was not yet possible to take the idea of evolution as the starting point. Rudolf Steiner's approach also deals with the sacraments 'in the light of their anthropological function.' But the seven-fold structure does not, as with Thomas, arise by chance—it has to do with the 'inner number-constitution of the world.' The fact is that every evolution takes its course in seven stages. Up to the middle of a cycle of evolution, the ascending forces, the evolutionary forces, predominate; thereafter, the ebbing forces, the involutory forces, begin to act. The sacraments are involution forces which are added to the corresponding stages of evolution. As stated above, they belong to the stream which flows from the future as a counter-stream in time. They appear as the polar opposite to the evolutionary stream of birth, as a stream of death—that is to say: as a stream which makes space for the working of the spirit. Put as briefly as possible: from out of the stream of evolution comes that which

gives natural development, evolution, its actual, deepest meaning. As involutory events, then, the renewed sacraments of The Christian Community are sources which, from out of the depths, confer meaning upon biographical development. In the Easter prayers of The Act of Consecration of Man, this secret is stated in so many words: Christ has risen unto human beings 'as the meaning of the Earth.'

Rudolf Steiner develops the understanding of the sacraments 'in their anthropological function' even further in that he brings them into connection with the members of Man's being. And here a differentiation within the seven-fold nature of the sacraments is also revealed. There are four 'earthly' members which the human being brings to 'birth' in the first four seven-year periods: the physical body at physical birth, the ether body with the readiness for school, the astral body with the onset of puberty and the 'I' at about the 21<sup>st</sup> year of life. These 'births' are not moments but processes which extend over an entire period of seven years. The three 'spiritual' members of his being will only be fully attained by Man in the future. They extend beyond the earthly boundaries of the personal biography and therefore relate to death and to those social tasks which from the outset are super-personal in their nature: Ordination of Priests and Marriage.

In the second course for the founders of The Christian Community, which took place three and a half months later, the differentiation into four 'earthly' and three 'spiritual' sacraments is developed still more precisely. Only the 'births' of

the four 'earthly' members are stages of evolution. Death is not an evolution into life; rather, it is itself an involution-event. Nor is the Ordination of Priests based upon an earthly foundation; it, too, has its basis in the spirit and reaches into the earthly world, as it were. Correspondingly, a quite new understanding of Marriage is also gained. In its true essence it is a spiritual reality that has its reflection in earthly reality. Last Anointing, Ordination of Priests and Marriage, then, are each inverse events to a corresponding fact of involution. The respective sacrament represents the transition of a spiritual fact into a fact of outer—evolutionary—life. The clearest example of this is perhaps the Ordination of Priests. The Last Anointing, too, is a ritual act taking place in life, but concerned with life after death. This way of looking at the sacraments is most surprising in the case of Marriage. One might at first think the opposite: that marriage is an unfolding of life, a stage of evolution. That would be quite in accordance with the traditional view of marriage. The fact that it is understood the other way about in The Christian Community indicates that a new understanding of marriage is yet to be developed.

When the seven sacraments are understood as developmental stages in the biography of Man, as relating to Evolution and Involution, then their sequence also follows and agrees with the one arrived at by Thomas (who himself follows Petrus Lombardus), albeit from a different standpoint: Baptism—Confirmation—Act of Consecration of Man—Sacramental Consultation—Last Anointing—Ordination—Marriage.

# The Little Prince — a Children's Book?

Hans-Bernd Neumann

The Little Prince by the author and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (born 1900) was published in 1943. This book has been translated into more than 180 languages and, along with the Harry Potter tales, is among the most read stories in the world. Wherever it is sold, The Little Prince is presented as a children's book. But was it actually intended as such? Of course, in the dedication to Léon Werth Saint-Exupéry himself indicates that The Little Prince was written for children; and yet we may wonder what exactly he meant by that?

The dedication to Léon Werth is extremely enigmatic. Three times the author apologizes for dedicating The Little Prince to an adult. In the first instance he does so because Léon Werth is his friend; then because he understands everything, even books for children, and thirdly because he needs comforting as he is hungry and cold in France. Finally Saint-Exupéry writes: 'To Léon Werth when he was still a little boy.'

If we want to take this detailed dedication not merely as a dedication to a friend, but as a message indicating how the book should be read, then this is what it conveys: The Little Prince addresses the child in the human being. In a Christian, religious context, the concept 'Son of Man' could stand for 'the child in the human being'.

These thoughts about the dedication to Léon Werth would probably seem without foundation or too contrived, if the first chapter did not draw our attention in the same direction. On the first page we encounter two naïve drawings by Saint-Exupéry. A brown snake is in the act of

devouring a blue, anxious animal. This drawing is then followed by Drawing Number One which—as cognoscenti of The Little Prince know—is not a hat but a gigantic snake that is digesting a sad elephant (Drawing Number Two on the next page). In a way, the text has not much to do with the little prince; rather, it just points up for the reader what the actual problem of the adults is. When an adult sees Drawing Number One, as a rule he says, 'That is a hat!' In other words, the adult quickly arrives at a finite, settled judgment, which, in this case, is definitely wrong, since the supposed hat is in fact a gigantic snake digesting an elephant. But Saint-Exupéry is seeking those who do not come to a definite conclusion so quickly, who are not 'sensible', with their opinions and ideas already finalized. He seeks human beings who are open to the new and unknown—and these are precisely children, because they are children. It is a characteristic feature of childhood to be open to the unknown and not to have closed, ready-made judgments. However, this attribute is not restricted to a particular age of life; rather, it describes an attitude with which a human being can relate to the world.

Here, then, is our working hypothesis: The Little Prince is not a children's book; rather, it is a book which addresses itself to the forces of the child in the human being. If we live

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with this hypothesis, the question arises: who, then, is the little prince?

The circumstances in which he appears are unusual. Saint-Exupéry is in a life-threatening situation. Owing to engine failure he has had to make an emergency landing in the desert, with limited reserves of water. His chances of being found are small. In this dangerous position he hears a voice at day-break saying, 'Draw me a sheep!' Now, there are many things one might imagine hearing in such circumstances, but—'Draw me a sheep!' What can be the author's intention?

Now Saint-Exupéry tries to draw sheep. One is too sickly, the next is a ram, the third is too old. All concrete representations of sheep are inadequate in the eyes of the little prince! Only when Saint-Exupéry draws a box and says that the real sheep is inside is the little prince satisfied, surprisingly enough. The reader is thus guided through a theory of knowledge in picture form, from image and idea to concept! Whoever encounters the little prince receives a schooling in questions of knowledge. Whoever follows him further learns to distinguish the essential from the inessential. The repair of a faulty aeroplane engine is of no consequence in comparison with the war of the sheep against the roses (Chapter 7). The author succeeds in leading the reader through a path of knowledge with quite simple images. One can say: Saint-Exupéry describes a path of schooling!

### **What does the little prince look like?**

It is worthwhile finding a copy of the book in which Saint-Exupéry's naïve drawings are reproduced in colour and in their right place. Each picture has its

definite meaning and position. The little prince only appears once in full princely regalia, otherwise always only in 'working clothes'. The scarf is a particular feature of this 'everyday' clothing. It is almost always seen standing vertically up from the body of the prince, as though the wind were blowing it away. Only when the little prince is speaking with the snake—i.e. when death appears—does the scarf hang limply down.

When the little prince first appears to us he is clothed in a very special way. His cloak is blue on the outside and reddish-violet on the inside. On his shoulders two stars can be seen, in his left hand he holds a dagger. His undergarment is white, he wears a golden belt. On his feet are steel-blue boots. His hair is the golden colour of wheat. Between lung and larynx a flower is visible. All these elements of this regal apparition of the little prince are familiar to us from the Book of Revelation to John, in the first chapter of which the Son of Man is described: the head shining like the sun, the sword, the feet of gold-ore, the white garment with the golden girdle round the breast and the seven stars in the right hand. All the elements of the Son of Man appear in the little prince, albeit arranged differently. The whole figure is enveloped in a cloak which we otherwise know from representations of the Virgin Mary.

The little prince—a depiction of the Son of Man? Reading *The Little Prince* with this key is like a voyage of discovery. All the motifs still to come can be interpreted meaningfully without forcing the key in any way. However, we shall come to this a little later.

The Little Prince, then, is a testimonial to an actual experience of the Son of Man.

Saint-Exupéry had this experience, probably in 1935 when, after his crash-landing in the Libyan desert, he barely escaped dying of thirst. In the course of the seven years following his miraculous rescue in 1935, Saint-Exupéry developed his experiences into *The Little Prince*. Thus this story is not just a book for children; rather, it bears witness to the forces of childhood in every human being. The message brought us by Saint-Exupéry is: The Son of Man is present.

### **The Earth has a good Reputation.**

A significant picture-element in *The Little Prince* is the motif of the planet. Firstly, there is the 'home' planet of the little prince with its volcanoes, the rose and the possibility of experiencing as many sunrises as one wishes. Then there is the description of the little prince's journey, finally ending on the seventh planet, the earth. What does the image of the planet indicate?

We may know of the existence of an alien planet, yet it is a place which can never be reached by a living human being. It is an illusion to think that Neil Armstrong or another astronaut ever walked on the moon. Certainly, they may have come very close to the moon's surface in their spacesuits—the earth-covering essential for human beings in space—but no one has ever yet touched the moon's surface with his bare skin, for it would have meant instant death. Human beings are dependent upon their 'earth-covering' which must envelop them if they are not to perish. Accordingly, planets are inaccessible places, although it is evident that they exist.

This image is the central motif in *The Little Prince*. But what does that image represent? Do we know of other places

whose existence we do not doubt, even though they are inaccessible to us?

Anyone living in a close relationship with someone else knows that although one may come very near to the soul of a loved person, yet one can never completely reach it. Similarly, we also know that our own soul, our 'home', is inaccessible to every other soul. Some will say, 'Thank God for that!', whilst others will sigh wistfully, for sometimes this soul-planet can be very lonely.

The planet as an image of the human soul? Six planet dwellers are described in *The Little Prince*: The King, the Conceited Man, the Tippler, the Business Man, the Lamplighter and the Geographer. The one-sidedness and peculiarities of every one of these inhabitants are characterized sensitively and affectionately by the little prince. In each of these figures we can see a one-sidedness of human nature. The little prince touches upon this in a most kindly way without damning or judging. Who does not know people who think they can control the world from their sofa, addicts who are ashamed of their addiction etc.?

Soul-locations or soul-deserts are what is being described by Saint-Exupéry. But what a surprise! Not only are the planets inhabited, they are also visited by the little prince. It seems that he has this particular gift of being able to travel from planet to planet. Now what Being is it that has the ability to travel from soul to soul and to dwell there? In the Sunday Service for Children the guest of the soul is described as the One who can become alive 'in the being of those who gave Him a dwelling in their heart'. Through the image of the planet, Saint-Exupéry gives us a further

hint as to the nature of the little prince: he is the One who can live in the heart (the soul) of the human being.

Finally, the little prince arrives on the earth, which the Geographer told him 'has a good reputation.' We do not learn how the earth has earned this good reputation; rather, it is just a fact that the little prince reveals.

'The earth has a good reputation.' Arrived on the earth, he first of all encounters the snake. We shall consider their conversation later. There follows a description of a most remarkable journey in the search for human beings on the earth. First, the little prince climbs a high mountain. He experiences the earth as 'all dry, jagged and salty'. Then he comes to the rose garden, and finally he meets the fox. His search for earthly Man takes the prince on a journey through the realms of the minerals, the plants and that of the animals. Again we are in the sphere of the words of the Sunday Service which also speak of stone, plant and beast. At last the little prince comes to the railway switchman who sorts people into batches of a thousand, and to the merchant selling

thirst-quenching pills—indications pointing to possible aberrations in human life on the earth: on the one hand, the human being as unindividualized group-creature, on the other by-passing life entirely.

After these experiences he meets the man Saint-Exupéry. We may consider that the whole of the prince's journey through the planetary spheres will actually have been the path to Saint-Exupéry: Saint-Exupéry the king, Saint-Exupéry the conceited, Saint-Exupéry the tippler etc.—and that perhaps the six planet-dwellers are also to be found in every human soul? However that may be, the little prince becomes more than a friend to Saint-Exupéry. Through him he sees the earth in all its beauty. The well in the desert, the gold of the wheat fields, the laughter of the stars, the song of the well's winch: from now, through his encounter with the little prince, Saint-Exupéry sees the beauty of the earth itself in every earthly thing. For him, the 'good reputation' of the earth is confirmed, for it is permeated with the being and essence of the little prince.

(Translated by Jon Madsen)

*To be continued in our next issue.*

## Reviews

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### ***The Ascent of Man***

**Eleanor C. Merry**

Floris Books, 284pp. Paperback £14.99

ISBN: 9780863156427

**Gillies Dalzell-Payne**

The *Ascent of Man*—out of print for several years—has been re-published by Floris Books in their 'Classics of Anthroposophy' series. In what is probably her best-known work, the author, the late Eleanor C Merry, sets out the History of Mankind, from pre-

history to the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It is a vast subject to cover; one that she covers in 284 readable pages by making each chapter a 'snapshot' of an aspect or era. So, for example, Genesis, the Sun, and Ancient India follow each other. This technique can easily leave one with the sensation of having read a book of essays, or short stories.

Some books fall into the 'page-turner' category, demanding a cover-to-cover ap-

proach. From the beginning you follow a thread of thought, or a pattern of relationships, to a conclusion. Once finished, the book is put away (and often you think no more about it).

Initially then, *The Ascent of Man* appears to fall into another category: a set of essays that repay a compendium-like, less linear approach. Drawn to a page, you read until interest is satisfied. The prescription repeats—you move to another place, another chapter.

There is a third category: the books that have ‘nuggets’ of wisdom or of clarity hidden for a reader to find. As the mass of material unfolds, an insight or a key piece of information enables the light to shine down and understanding to dawn.

Eleanor Merry’s book can be approached through each of these categories: page—turner, compendium and source of nuggets.

For the reader, the book is divided into two: ‘the Preparation’, and ‘Towards Fulfilment’. ‘The Preparation’ covers history pre-Christ. ‘Towards Fulfilment’ takes us from the early Church to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

I read the book first to find information about the Egyptian Initiation process, and how this process provided ‘Temple Sleep’ as a healing mechanism.

This led me in a grasshopper-like pattern to other chapters and other periods. First to ‘He must increase’—Christendom in development, covering Julian the Apostate, and the origin of the festival [‘Natale Solis Invicti’] held on December 25<sup>th</sup>. This led in turn to ‘The Sun of the North’, covering the preservation of spirituality and Hibernian wisdom... and so onward.

It was only when I discovered that I had read every chapter (!)—in this almost random sequence—that I realised I needed also to read ‘The Ascent of Man’ in a structured, sequential format.

The first two-thirds of the book provides a wonderfully coherent view of the devel-

opment of humankind up to the birth of Christ.

One might argue that ‘Towards Fulfilment’ (the heading for the final third of the book) is a very optimistic Sub-Title. There is a contrast to the cyclic process that human ‘civilisation’ demonstrates today yet again (from the South Sea Bubble’s Depression to the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s Depression to the New Century’s new Depression).

Nevertheless this post-Christ third also provides a clear and inter-related series of links.

These links relate the decline of Rome’s empire to the rise of Celtic mysticism. They show how the Middle Ages rose in contrast to the Celtic heritage, and link the Middle Ages—as expressed through the poets—to the Renaissance (and to the esoteric in Shakespeare).

Onward through Blake, Goethe and Novalis, the book concludes at the time of ‘the Ascent of Man’’s original publication—the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This early 20<sup>th</sup> Century period (1920s to 1930s) has particular echoes for us today.

Reviewing the book I found passage after passage had led me into other streams in my thoughts, and had enlightened my understanding.

Reading the book as a compendium I had questioned the source of much of the information: it is fair to point out that the book has no bibliography, and is perhaps light on references.

Re-reading sequentially, I am convinced that the scarcity of references was not through lack of scholarship, or shallowness of thought. Eleanor Merry wore her scholarship lightly; but it underpins every chapter.

Floris Books, the publishers, classify ‘the Ascent of Man’ as a Classic of Anthroposophy. I also recommend the book to anyone with an interest in Christology, or who regards themselves as Christian. To read the book would benefit them greatly in understanding and in knowledge.

***Time for Transformation  
Through Darkness to the Light***  
**Margarete van den Brink  
and Hans Stolp**

ISBN: 9781855842113

Paperback, Rudolf Steiner Press, £8,95

*Reviewed by Jane Sahin, Stourbridge*

Today, when many barriers of class, family, work and time have broken down, the question arises—how does a new world emerge from the ensuing chaos?

The first part of this book outlines the negative forces acting in our souls and in society, and goes on to give a picture of the historical evolution of consciousness, taking in the great epochs of civilisation.

The second part discusses the growing independence of the individual human spirit.

The co-authors, a priest and a communications consultant, are experienced authors who manage to bring the subject of our modern social dilemmas into the front room, as it were. With a frank look at issues such as loneliness, fear and the increasing violence in society, they bring great insight to this subject.

They suggest that these times are difficult for the soul of Western man, and that during our lives destiny brings us face to face with many soul trials. This is backed up by accounts from people from all walks of life, not huge revelations but many, many

small realisations and understandings that together form a picture of a new tide of human resourcefulness in the sea of soul strife and moral dilemmas.

‘What seems to be new in our time is that things we push away into the far corner of our soul no longer allow themselves to remain concealed but wait until there is a space in our heart and soul to confront and if possible to deal with them.’

‘The growing denial of all that transcends the material world has turned the question of evil into an even greater mystery than the orthodox church.’

The negative, dark forces can only act through human beings; they are pleased to remain invisible and have their existence denied. This makes their work a great deal easier. The authors show us how important it is to recognise these forces, be they in our own hearts and minds or in what we see around us.

This objectivity, with warmth of feeling and courage of will, transforms the victim into the victor.

The last part of the book gives practical exercises and examples of instances of transformation.

In the birth pangs of a new humanity, individuals increasingly can recognise the truth which sets them free to be able to work with the angelic beings who lovingly await our development as human beings.

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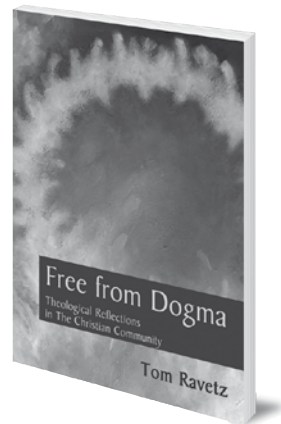
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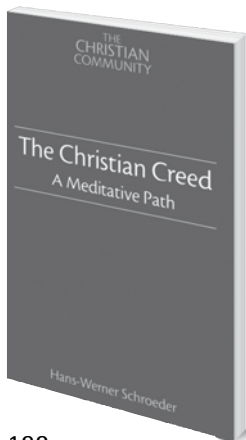
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Rev. Tom Ravetz completed the training for the priesthood of the Christian Community in Stuttgart and studied theology at the University of Aberdeen. He has been involved in training priests in Germany, and works in the UK and Ireland.



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Hans-Werner Schroeder, born in 1931, is a priest of the Christian Community. He teaches at the seminary in Stuttgart and is the author of *The Cosmic Christ*, *Necessary Evil*, *The Trinity* and *The Healing Power of Prayer* (all Floris Books).



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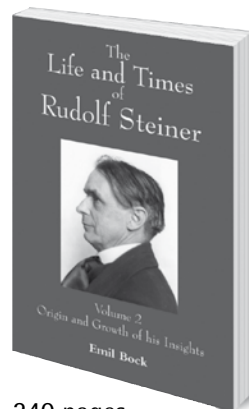
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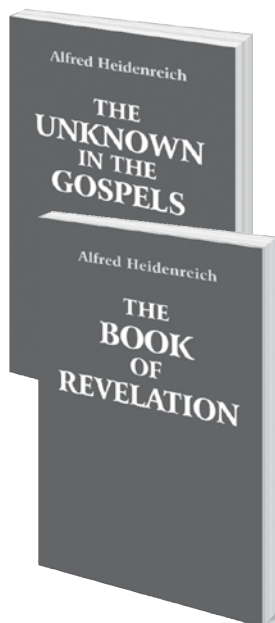
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